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RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3534  
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001595

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: A PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG TURKMEN IDEOLOGUE

Classified By: Charge Sylvia Reed Curran, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. PAO met with a young leader of the Turkmen Union of Youth and discussed the political ideology that supports President Berdimuhamedow. The underlying ideology of the Democratic Party is to support the notion of a strong leader. Without such a leader, tribal divisions and the lack of a unifying national identity would lead to the dissolution of the state. The Youth Union leader also expressed optimism about the future prospects for democracy in Turkmenistan, and a notable prejudice against members of other Turkmen tribes.  
END SUMMARY.

12. (C) On December 1, on the sidelines of a U.S. Embassy co-sponsored conference on technology and education, PAO met with Merdan Orazmyradov, the Head of the General Issues Department of the Magtymguly Youth Union of Turkmenistan (the new iteration of the former Soviet Komsomolets). Orazmyradov, a well spoken man in his mid twenties, was extremely candid in describing the ideology and political future of Turkmenistan. Prior to joining the Union of Youth, Mr. Orazmyradov worked for two years for the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan after completing his bachelor's degree in Russian language at the Azadi Institute of World Languages.

"OUR PARTY EXISTS TO SUPPORT THE NOTION OF A STRONG LEADER"

13. (C) During the wide-ranging conversation, Orazmyradov talked in depth about his activities while working with the Democratic Party. He worked for the party from 2006-2008 and described some of the programs undertaken to fill the vacuum left when former President Niyazov died. According to Orazmyradov, the underlying political ideology of the Democratic Party is to support the notion of "Strong Leader." He said that all of the political decisions and steps taken by the Party are to support this "leader." As a natural result of this ideology Orazmyradov explained that in 2007, the Democratic Party undertook several steps to build up President Berdimuhamedow in the eyes of the Turkmen people to fill the gap left by the unexpected death of Niyazov. He said that one of his responsibilities as a self-described "party apparatchik" was to visit the welayats and small villages to praise Berdimuhamedow with local leaders and political operatives unfamiliar with the new President.

"WITHOUT A STRONG LEADER, TURKMENISTAN WOULD FALL APART"

¶4. (C) When prompted, Orazmyradov explained further that a strong leader is necessary in Turkmenistan to "unify the country." He said that without a strong leader tribal divisions and the lack of a unifying national identity would lead to balkanization and the dissolution of the state. He alluded to the Ruhnama as a centerpiece of the creation of a "national myth" and said that as the Ruhnama praises the strong leaders of Turkmenistan's past, today's party exists to praise the leaders of today. He continued that Turkmenistan's history has shown repeatedly that without a strong leader, the tribes fall upon each other and leave themselves open to external conquest.

"THE OTHER TRIBES NEED THE TEKE TO HELP TEACH THEM"

¶5. (C) An otherwise very intelligent and academic conversation took a nasty turn as Orazmyradov began to denigrate the other tribes of Turkmenistan. He explained that although "you foreigners rarely understand the Turkmen tribes," each Turkmen understands the unique attributes and characteristics inherent in each tribe. As an example, he explained that all Turkmen outside the Yomut tribe understand that "a Yomut will lie and cheat when given the chance." He added similarly disparaging remarks about a few other tribes and continued that as a member of the Teke tribe, the self-described "most civilized" tribe, he felt a responsibility to take care of and educate the other Turkmen tribes.

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"HOPEFULLY, OVER TIME THE LEADERS WILL STAY IN POWER FOR SHORTER AND SHORTER DURATIONS"

¶6. (C) When the conversation turned to the political future of Turkmenistan, Orazmyradov expressed an unexpected optimism for democratic change. He said that during the early years of new statehood, the nation needed its leaders to stay for long periods of time, but that as the people develop and grow they will need their leaders to stay in power "for shorter and shorter durations."

¶7. (C) COMMENT: In a society that rarely discusses internal matters with foreigners, Orazmyradov's candor is surprising, although his comments reflect policy and practices prevalent throughout the Turkmen political and media infrastructure. The model of the strong leader is the one the Turkmen know and are most comfortable with. The leader is the embodiment of the state, similar to a monarch. In many ways, Turkmenistan is a khanate. Orazmyradov's open discussion of prevalent tribalism and potential ethnic conflict expresses more of a patronizing and bigoted approach to other tribes from the leading Teke tribe than actual underpinnings for violence. It seems that the Turkmen Democratic Party has developed a convenient ideology to support the majority Teke rule and personality cult that surrounded Niyazov and is growing around Berdimuhamedov. END COMMENT.  
CURRAN